

## **Fast Tracked by jackwabbit**

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**Summary:** Vignette. Found Family. Dad Hopper. Eleven has baggage.

**Spoilers:** Stranger Things, Season Two. **Summary:** It usually takes several weeks to form a habit. But given the proper motivation, things can change a whole lot faster.

## Fast Tracked

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Rated: G

Category: Vignette. Found Family. Dad Hopper.

Time Frame: Shortly after Season Two.

Spoilers: Stranger Things, Season Two.

Summary: It usually takes several weeks to form a habit. But given the proper motivation, things can change a whole lot faster.

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He knew he should do it.

It was the law, after all. And he was supposed to enforce it.

Still, it wasn't habit, so he forgot about it more often than he remembered.

But today was different. She was in the truck. And for once, they weren't rushing off to an emergency.

So even if he thought the whole thing was annoying, he still called out to her as she climbed into the truck.

"Seat belt," he said.

Her brow furrowed. "What?"

"Seat belt," he repeated, miming putting one on.

She stared at him like he was crazy, clearly having no idea what he meant.

Finally, he sighed and reached toward her. He pulled her belt across her body and buckled it.

The locking mechanism engaged.

And that's when she lost it.

An ear-splitting scream filled the truck and she thrashed against the seat violently. Her hands flailed and hit anything they could reach, including him.

He ignored her fists and threw himself across the seat to grab her roughly, holding her down with his weight as he fumbled to undo the belt.

"It's OK!" he yelled, as the belt came free. "Calm down! It's OK! I've got you. You're OK."

After another moment of thrashing, she stilled. Her breathing normalized, though his was still ragged and she had tears on her face. Miraculously, though, there was no blood, and nothing was broken.

"Sh," he placated, brushing one hand through her hair slowly. "I've got you. Sh. It's OK."

Eventually, her tears dried and he settled enough to let her go. He slid slowly back across the seat.

It was quiet for a long moment.

Then he reached across and behind his body to pull his own belt into place.

It clicked as it locked, and she flinched.

He took it off.

Then he put it on and removed it again.

And again.

Over and over.

He couldn't say how many times it took.

But the flinching grew less and less, then stopped entirely.

Once it did, he looked at her with a question in his eyes.

She stared back for what seemed a very long time before finally

speaking.

"It comes off?"

He nodded. "It comes off."

"Any time I want?"

He nodded again, deciding that now was not the time to point out that "any time I want" wasn't exactly right.

"Yeah," he said. "Whenever you want."

She took a deep breath.

"And I have to?"

"You have to."

"It's a rule?" Her voice held a note of hope, like maybe it wouldn't be, but that was quickly dashed by his gruff voice.

"It's a rule," he said firmly.

She sighed and very slowly mimicked his actions. She drew the belt across her body and started to put the buckle together. She hesitated as she did, and he spoke again.

"You wanna do it together?" he asked.

She nodded tentatively.

He matched her position, ready to click his belt into place.

"On three?"

She nodded again, still fearful.

"OK. You ready? One... Two... Three!"

At that, he pushed the buckle together with a resounding click. She did the same.

She undid it nearly immediately and breathed a sigh of relief.

They repeated their little act more times than he cared to think about, but finally, they drove to town, both secured in their seats and somehow only ten minutes late to their destination.

They say it takes twenty one days to form a habit.

In Jim Hopper's case, it only took one.

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A/N: it is indelibly stamped into my consciousness that I started wearing a seat belt in 1985. Apparently, the national law requiring them was passed in 1983. We are at 1984 in Hawkins right now, so I think this is about right.